U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

SAVANNAH RIVER OPERATIONS OFFICE
AIKEN, SC 29802

NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Jim Giusti, DOE, (803) 952-7697
james-r.giusti@srs.gov

Paivi Nettamo, SRNS, (803) 646-6075
paivi.nettamo@srs.gov

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Recovery Act's HWCTR Project Empty of Equipment, Ready for Grouting

AIKEN, S.C. – Thanks to investments from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the next phase has begun on decommissioning the Heavy Water Components Test Reactor (HWCTR) at the Savannah River Site (SRS). With the reactor building now empty of its two steam generators and the reactor vessel, work can start on moving equipment into the empty vessel cavity and filling the below-grade portion of HWCTR with approximately 5,000 cubic yards of grout to prevent contaminants from reaching the groundwater.

"The HWCTR project is a good example of the many Recovery Act projects that are contributing to the 75-percent footprint reduction strategy for SRS," said Candice Freeman, deputy federal projects director U.S. DOE-Savannah River. "Great care and careful planning have ensured the safe decommissioning of this piece of SRS history."

On Feb. 1, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), the management and operations contractor at SRS, used a 660-ton crane to remove HWCTR's 174,000-pound dome. Over the past two weeks, the crane lifted out two 41,600-pound steam generators and the 220,000-pound reactor vessel, while a smaller crane rotated the equipment to a horizontal plane before easing the massive pieces to the ground. The generators and the reactor vessel have been moved to the Site's burial ground in E Area for disposal.

After the reactor building is filled with grout below grade and the metal shell demolition is complete, a concrete cover will be placed over the reactor's footprint, officially marking the end of HWCTR's decommissioning. Completion of the $25-million Recovery Act project is expected by the end of August.

The test reactor has been a part of the U.S. Department of Energy's landscape at SRS since 1959. HWCTR's mission was to test experimental fuel assemblies for commercial heavy-water power reactors. In 1964, the U.S. government decided to pursue other reactor designs for commercial electrical power generation, and HWCTR became an inactive reactor.

"This important Recovery Act project has allowed for the safe disposition of HWCTR's key equipment, a major step before the below-grade grouting begins," said Paul Hunt, vice president of the Recovery Act portfolio for SRNS. "HWCTR has always had an important presence onsite; its decommissioning is no less significant."

Additional information on the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management and the Savannah River Site can be found at http://www.em.doe.gov or http://www.srs.gov. For more information about the SRS Recovery Act Project, visit www.srs.gov/recovery.

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Photo Captions:

HWCTR SG:
SRS removed one of the two 41,600-pound steam generators that were designed to cool the Heavy Water Components Test Reactor (HWCTR). Earlier in the decommissioning project, the 174,000-pound dome was removed.

HWCTR SG 2:
One of the Heavy Water Components Test Reactor's (HWCTR's) steam generators is leveled horizontally after coming out of the top of the reactor building. The generators will be transported to the Site's burial ground for disposal.

HWCTR RV 2:
The 174,000-pound reactor vessel was removed from the Heavy Water Components Test Reactor (HWCTR) during the Recovery Act decommissioning project.

HWCTR RV 1:
A Recovery Act employee guides the Heavy Water Components Test Reactor (HWCTR)'s 174,000-pound reactor vessel to the ground after removing it from the dome opening.